



Custer County

September 2020

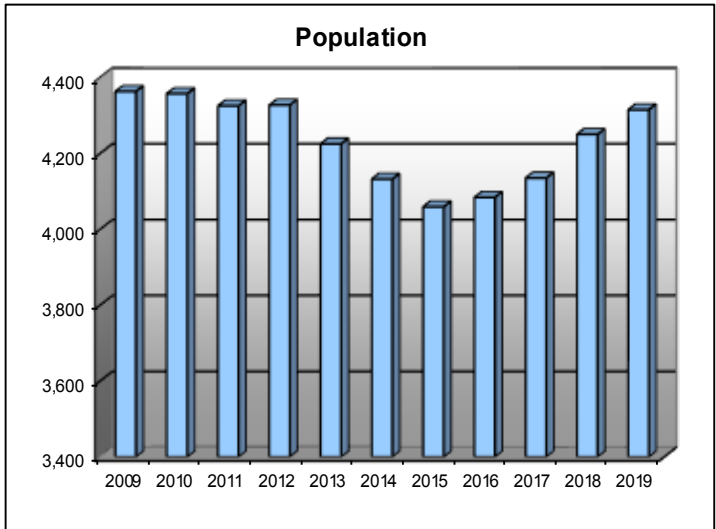
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Workforce Trends

Population

Custer County's 2019 population was 4,315 people. Its largest city, Challis, ID, ranks 80th in the state for population (1,091 people). For each person the county offers more than a square mile of space. It reflects the fortunes of the mining industry. Population decreased in the early 2000s, reaching a low in 2005 after losing over 300 residents as Hecla Mining closed. Population began growing again in 2006 but declined until 2016 when 25 people were added. The growth continued in 2019 when the county added 65 people, even small population gains mean good things for the county.

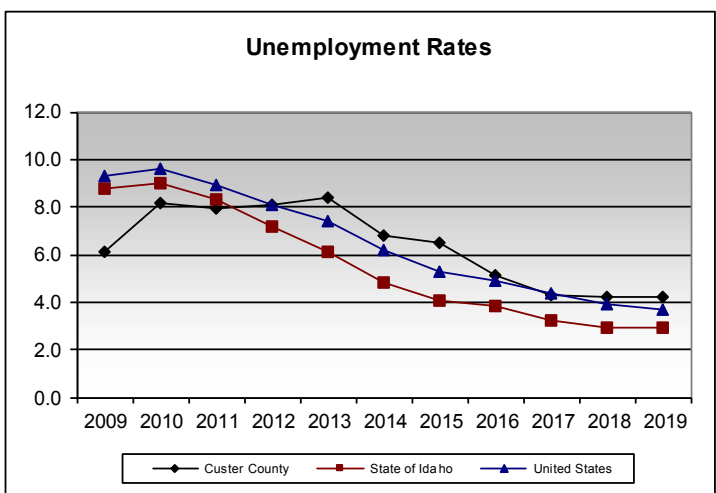
The county has been concentrating on diversifying beyond mining. Economic developers are working hand-in-hand with government officials to attract new business and help existing ones expand to reverse, or at least slow, the decline in the future.



Labor Force & Employment

Custer County's unemployment rate was higher than the state and nation early in the last decade. In 2003 the rate dipped to match the national rate but has fluctuated since then. The civilian labor force steadily decreased from 2002 to 2007 and has shown little change since. Because the county has limited employers, mergers and changes in management can severely affect the workforce, many of whom travel from other counties. The 2007 unemployment rate was the lowest of the last decade. It rose to over 8 percent between 2010 and 2013, then dropping to 6.9 percent in 2014. The county has seen a significant decrease in annual unemployment rates over the last few years, the 2019 rate was 4.2 percent, up slightly from 2018's 4 percent.

One-third of the county's jobs are in government and natural resources. With only 5 percent of the land in private ownership, the Idaho Department of Fish & Game



and the federal departments of Interior and Agriculture have cadres of employees to maintain the land. They complement employees of school districts and local government.

Trade is still a large industry as is leisure and hospitality because of resources like Redfish Lake, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Borah Peak, the highest point in Idaho. Efforts are also underway to change the Boulder White Clouds National Monument into Idaho's first National Park.

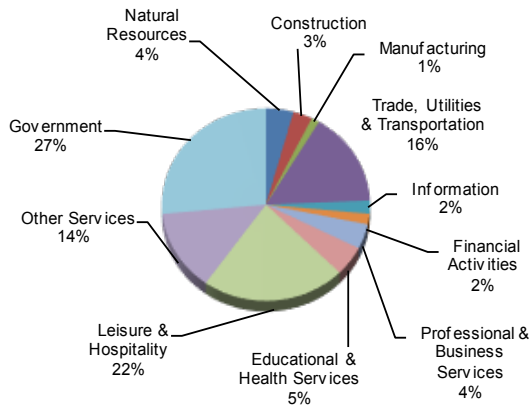
Labor Force	Aug 19	Aug 20
Civilian Labor Force	2,231	2,278
Total Employment	2,138	2,181
Unemployed	93	97
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.2	4.3
State of Idaho % Unemployed	2.9	4.2
U.S. % Unemployed	3.7	8.4

Labor Force	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Civilian Labor Force	2,676	2,295	2,302	2,336	2,209	2,136	2,130	2,144	2,158	2,186	2,228
Unemployment	163	188	183	189	185	146	139	109	92	91	94
% of Labor Force Unemployed	6.1	8.2	7.9	8.1	8.4	6.8	6.5	5.1	4.3	4.2	4.2
Employment	2,514	2,107	2,119	2,147	2,024	1,990	1,991	2,035	2,066	2,095	2,134

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Nonfarm Payroll Jobs for 2019



Covered Employment & Wages

Covered employment experienced a small rebound in 2017 with a 2.1 percent increase to 1,481. However wages continued a downward trend by dropping to \$31,366 from 2016. The closures of two mines, and steady decreased in trade, covered employment fell by 10 percent and wages decreased 4.6 percent.

Wages for 6 out of 12 industries increased in 2017, while the average wage for total covered employment fell 0.3 percent. Despite the decline in the average wage paid by the mining companies, the industry still offered the highest average wage of \$85,914—nearly double the next highest wage of any industry in the county in 2017.

Major Employers

Challis & Mackay Joint School Districts #181 & #182
Custer County
Idaho & U.S. Government (BLM, F&G, Ag)
Lamb's Foodtown
The Village Inn
Thompson Creek Mining Co
Village Square

Eastern Idaho Occupational Wages*	Entry Wage	Median Wage
Cashiers	\$8.39	\$10.51
Farmworkers & Laborers	\$9.74	\$11.93
Industrial Truck/Tractor Operators	\$11.84	\$15.24
Laborers & Material Movers, Hand	\$9.73	\$14.04
Lodging Managers	\$13.80	\$29.13
Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	\$8.53	\$10.61
Operating Engineers & Other Construction Equipment Operators	\$15.41	\$21.06
Retail Salespersons	\$8.83	\$13.52
Waiters & Waitresses	\$8.46	\$11.24

* Additional occupational wage data can be found on the Idaho Department of Labor website at <https://lmi.idaho.gov/oes>

Covered Employment & Average Annual Wages Per Job for 2009, 2018 & 2019	2009		2018		2019	
	Average Employment	Average Wages	Average Employment	Average Wages	Average Employment	Average Wages
Total Covered Wages	1,663	\$32,248	1,491	\$31,805	1,513	\$32,402
Agriculture	39	\$20,828	57	\$24,422	48	\$25,875
Mining	351	\$63,401	65	\$83,977	70	\$78,870
Construction	52	\$29,090	50	\$31,888	49	\$30,790
Manufacturing	**	**	25	\$29,755	21	\$35,905
Trade, Utilities, & Transportation	253	\$21,425	244	\$27,450	260	\$28,795
Information	32	\$41,855	40	\$48,247	37	\$55,046
Financial Activities	56	\$16,748	28	\$24,788	28	\$25,966
Professional and Business Services	43	\$28,418	79	\$29,317	69	\$34,078
Educational and Health Services	70	\$15,612	83	\$28,179	82	\$29,649
Leisure and Hospitality	274	\$13,691	349	\$20,948	364	\$21,471
Other Services	23	\$31,172	54	\$35,986	53	\$36,893
Government	469	\$31,938	418	\$38,670	433	\$37,903

Per Capita Income	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Custer County	\$33,692	\$33,994	\$35,848	\$39,493	\$41,307	\$41,413	\$41,889	\$42,805	\$41,476	\$43,185
State of Idaho	\$31,186	\$31,957	\$33,515	\$35,188	\$36,200	\$37,896	\$39,857	\$40,670	\$42,094	\$43,901
United States	\$39,284	\$40,546	\$42,735	\$44,599	\$44,851	\$47,058	\$48,978	\$49,870	\$51,885	\$54,446

Information provided by Bureau Economic Analysis